

SECOND ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

BOARD OF MANAGERS

OF THE

Beneficent Building Association,

WITH

A SHORT SKETCH OF ITS ORIGIN.

Chartered, June 7th, 1869.

PHILADELPHIA:

WILLIAM P. KILDARE, PRINTER, NOS. 734 AND 736 SANSON STREET.

1871.

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AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE STOCKHOLDERS OF THE BENEFICENT
BUILDING ASSOCIATION, held the 4th of May, 1871, the following

OFFICERS AND MANAGERS

Were Elected to Serve for the Ensuing Year :

PRESIDENT, SAMUEL MIDDLETON,
TREASURER, SAMUEL HUSTON.

MANAGERS :

THOMAS S. NEWLIN,	ROBERT B. STERLING,
JOHN C. DAVIS,	JAMES S. WHITNEY,
JOSEPH K. WHEELER,	WILLIAM C. HOUSTON,
CHARLES SPENCER,	WILLIAM L. REHN,

And at a Meeting of the Board of Managers the same day, WILLIAM
L. REHN, was elected Secretary.

NOTE.—The Stockholders having referred the Report of the Managers to the in-coming Board, for the publication of whatever part of it they might deem proper,—such publication to be accompanied by a Short Sketch of the Origin of the Association,—on motion the Officers of the Board were chosen a committee for the performance of the duty.

WILLIAM L. REHN,
Secretary of the Board of Managers.

THE REFORMATION OF BEDFORD STREET

had for many years engaged the earnest attention of numbers of our best citizens, who labored for it faithfully through all those years with whatever means of moral and religious influence they could command. No adequate results, however, ever rewarded their labors; and at the end of a generation, their experience of the work in the past tended only to dispirit them as to its future. Beyond the rescue of an occasional child from the shocking associations about it, they dared expect nothing: the permanent reformation of an adult had almost died out of their thoughts.

In this state of things about three years ago, the need of some other and additional agency in the case having become manifest, one was suggested, which proposed *the physical reformation of the street, in its houses, and yards, and gutters,—as a basis and support for the higher instrumentalities, moral and spiritual, already employed for the population*; and it having been approved, the

BENEFICENT BUILDING ASSOCIATION

was thereupon organized as that agency. The plan of operation it designed, was the building out the decayed and squalid tenements of the street (the harbors and breeders of its iniquity), with neat and comfortable dwellings, and the surrounding these with all the needed provisions for cleanliness and health; so that if the hopelessly depraved of the old occupants were gradually driven away, as they would be, by the loss of the accommodations for their evil courses, those disposed to reform might find at hand homes, in which self respect could be fostered, and good resolutions, for the first time, have the opportunity to ripen into virtuous or religious lives.

The Association has just held its second annual meeting ; and the obvious reasons for avoiding publicity in regard to its transactions in the beginning, having for the most part ceased, the Board of Managers now submit to the public a summary of their report to the stockholders, showing what they have accomplished hitherto, and giving the grounds on which they base their hope of the ultimate success of their undertaking. They do this in order to secure for it the favor of their fellow citizens, and such additional subscriptions to the stock of the Association, as will enable it to hasten forward its benevolent design.

After alluding to several properties that had been purchased by the Association, but had failed to come into its possession through defects of titles, &c., the

R E P O R T

proceeds : The loss of these properties is to be regretted, only as lessening the number of improvements during the year, contemplated by the Association. The diminution is not only of those that would have been made upon these particular lots, but upon the ones adjoining them also, and which are actually in our possession. The Board having determined upon fifteen feet as the proper front for its houses, and the lots being generally twenty feet each, three at least must be secured in a body, before it would be safe to build on a single one. Unfortunately, those we have lost have broken this contiguity. In any other respect the Board can hardly be a loser ; as two of the three properties must before long be sold, and the probability is they will then be bought lower ; the improvement in the character of the street tending to bring down the prices of property, which has been extravagantly high heretofore, only because of the large income its appropriation to the worst uses has secured for it. For the same reason, the Board have not been forward to make *new* purchases ; though ready at all times to buy upon lots being offered low or to prevent their falling into bad hands.

The improvements made during the year have been the following: On No. 613 Bedford St., a two story house with Mansard roof and back building, comprising in the whole eight rooms,—which is rented to a good tenant. Part of this building is occupied as a Womens' and Children's Hospital and Dispensary, under the charge of Dr. (Mrs.) Keller, a graduate of the Female Medical College. Such a provision has long been needed in the neighborhood, and cannot fail to prove of great benefit to it, both in the bodily relief and comfort it will dispense, and in the moral influence it will furnish such good opportunity for. Besides, it will withdraw children from those scenes in the sickness of their mothers, which, as now circumstanced, they are compelled to witness, and which are destructive of all modesty in them.

Two other houses are under contract for erection on the adjoining lots, Nos. 615 and 617, which will be in all respects like the foregoing, except as to the back building, which these will not have. And another still is going up on No. 622 Bedford street. This is to be built so as to accommodate carriages on the ground floor, and in all other particulars to be like the last named. Mr. Bell, the present tenant of the ground, will use this building in his business—that of a hackman; and the Board think the introduction of such an activity into the street, witnessing, as it must, against the idleness around, will do something to shame it away and so help along the work of reformation.

Though these improvements are far fewer than the Board had hoped to be able by this time to report, they are as many as in their judgment were warranted by the circumstances.

During last summer, the Board rented No. 617 Bedford St., to the "Mission" for a bathing house; and allowed its use and that of No. 615, without charge, through part of the winter and present spring, for the free lodging at night, in the one of men, and the other of women; thus preserving them from the dreadful companionships as well as the discomfort and sufferings of

the neighboring cellars. Much good resulted from this; a large number of these cellars having been closed for want of lodgers. And in this connection, it is proper for the Board to express here their high appreciation of the work at large of this Mission, and of its excellent superintendent, the Rev. John D. Long, whose energy and zeal in his most trying work, entitle him to the sympathy and aid of all interested in the welfare, physical and moral, of their fellow creatures. Our Association could not have accomplished what it has, without his co-operation; and the Board earnestly hope this co-operation may long be continued to it.

The Board, early in the year, succeeded in having a sewer constructed by the City, through Bedford Street from Sixth to Seventh; thus providing a means of cleanliness and protection against disease, long and sadly needed there.

They have also induced the erection by the "Fountain Society," of fountains at the following points, viz:

Corner Spafford and Baker Streets,
 Corner South Street and Sixth,
 Corner Bedford and Seventh Streets,
 First Street, above South,
 St. Mary Street, between Sixth and Seventh.

These are valuable aids to us in their damaging effects on the dram shops, relieving, as they do, the drivers of vehicles from the obligation to purchase liquor, in return for the accommodations for watering their horses, heretofore furnished only by the keepers of these places.

During the year the street has been visited, at the instance of the Association, by Judges Ludlow and Paxson, and District Attorney Sheppard; and their presence in it has, as in the case of the visits of other officers and administrators of the law heretofore, left a wholesome impression upon the residents.

The Board are happy in being able to report a steadily improving condition of Bedford Street. Lieutenant Smith, of the 17th Police District, in which it is embraced, reports *the number of arrests in the whole district in January, February, March*

and April of 1869, to have been 1146 ; and for the same months of this year 604, a decrease of 47 per cent.: while his estimate is, that for Bedford Street and its immediate vicinity, the falling off has been fully 75 per cent. And the Rev. Mr. Long coincides with him in this opinion.

In reference to the results, generally, of the work of our Association, Mr. Long writes to the Secretary as follows:—

“DEAR SIR:

I promised to give you some facts relative to the good effects of the Beneficent Building Association's work in Bedford Street and its vicinity. My interest in the Association, let me say, is still unabated; and I watch its operations with interest. Its good results are:—

1st. Its restraining influence over the vicious portion of this section, by the encouragement and moral support it gives to the faithful policemen, who are trying to break up the dens of corruption that abound here. Houses of a certain description are not so easily rented as formerly. Numbers of well dressed and *apparently* respectable persons from different parts of the City, have been in the habit of visiting these localities at a late hour of the night. Some of these have been arrested; and the effect has been to deter others from coming. Several stores are now offered for rent, as thieves cannot sell their goods with the same safety as formerly.

2d. The Association has inspired hope in the better class of the population of this district, of better days in the future; while it has wrought despair in the hearts of wicked men, who have become timid about investing largely in their business projects, lest events in the future should bring about their ruin.

3d. The sanitary condition of the quarter is constantly improving; as a word from the Association to the Board of Health is sure to be heeded. The fountains erected in different streets have proved a blessing to all concerned.

As Superintendent of the Bedford Street Mission, I am greatly indebted to the Association for valuable assistance in the discharge of my duties.

4th. The new building you have had erected is an educator of taste and neatness to Bedford Street, and is a warning to all the old shanties in the street that their end is nigh. In conclusion, I believe, more than ever, that the principle upon which

your Association is founded, is the the correct one for the permanent reformation of this neighborhood; and the good already accomplished is worth all the labor that has been expended.

Respectfully,

Signed

JOHN D. LONG."

From this testimony as well as their own observation, your Board are happy to say they are more than ever convinced that the work of the Association, now to be carried forward into another year, is destined to prove a full success; and this, notwithstanding the predictions to the contrary of many who have refused to aid it by their subscriptions. These tell us, in substance, that the replacing the old tenements with good houses will serve only to scatter their wretched occupants; who, driven to other neighborhoods, will be sure to corrupt them; and that thus the whole result of our work will be the making of many Bedford Streets in place of one. To this the Board reply, that the argument would have force, if the individual quitting the street could carry with him its agencies and aids for evil, and put them in operation in his new abode. But as he leaves these behind him, to find them no where else, he goes comparatively powerless to propagate his evil. The new neighborhood, too, which he enters, is of necessity better than the one he has left. To be admitted into it and allowed to feel at home, he must put off at least some of the signs of his old residence. He finds himself at once under a better neighborhood sentiment, however low; sees himself more in the light and under the eye of the law; shame begins to be possible to him because not *every* thing now about him is vile; and with the possibility of shame comes the possibility of reformation. Thus situated, there is certainly far more likelihood of the man being benefited by his new neighborhood than there is of *it* being injured by *him*.

Besides, a Bedford Street with its complete provision of all the instrumentalities and facilities, at the lowest cost or without any cost, for the indulgence of the foulest propensities of the individual and the plotting of the most daring crimes against so-

ciety, is not made in a year or in ten years, but is the growth, more nearly, of a century of unchecked lawlessness and vice. And if but one generation of unfortunates, who, being born in it are doomed almost necessarily to a life of infamy, can be saved from that fate through the efforts of our Association, surely those efforts will have been abundantly justified. But there is no good reason why, the street once broken up and its population scattered, another should ever be known among us. There is no controlling necessity to force it upon us. Every interest of the city, material and moral, is against it. It needs but a moderate enforcement of the law and an ordinary sense of duty on the part of the private citizen to prevent it. And any difficulty there *might* have been, will hereafter be greatly lessened by the operation of the proposed House of Correction, which is designed for and must gather into it the very class who would make up the population of such a quarter. The gradual removal, too, from our smaller streets of those worthless frame buildings, which, attracting the vagrant and criminal by their cheap accommodations, so endanger the morality of neighborhoods, and are so indispensable to the formation of a Bedford Street,—without which, indeed, the present one would not have existed,—furnishes another important aid in its prevention.

All these considerations encourage the confident hope of the Managers that the first Bedford Street of Philadelphia will have been its last.

Respectfully submitted,

(Signed),

SAML. MIDDLETON,

WM. L. REHN, *Secretary.*

President.

Subscriptions to the stock of the Association will be received by Samuel Huston, Esq., Treasurer, No. 407 Walnut Street. Shares, \$100 each.

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